**DOCUMENT RESUME**

ED 062 999 LI 003 680

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| AUTHOR | Tews, Ruth M. |
| TITLE | Bibliotherapy: A Social Responsibility. |
| PUB DATE | 71 |
| NOTE | 18p.; (13 References); Speech given at Institute on Specialized Library Services, Extension Division, Indiana State Library (Indianapolis, Ind., July 22-23. 1971) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29 |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Bibliotherapy; *Librarians; Libraries; *Library Services; *Social Responsibility; *Special Libraries; Speeches |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Library Role |

ABSTRACT

In this day of change and upheavel, the basic purpose of the library remains unchanged. What is necessary is a change in our thinking, a re-evaluation of our activities and how they meet and fulfill that purpose and goal. Simply put: the library has a vested responsibility to society, namely, the whole man and to culture. The contributions of the library today should be to help relieve and perhaps even help in solving the problems of society, whatever they may be, to support all efforts to help improve and educate the citizen. Its resources should be used widely and with imagination. The realm of using the principles of bibliotherapy opens new directions and forces for librarians. We librarians who have been working in hospitals and institutions have long been involved in programing for the rehabilitation and welfare of readers. We use ourselves, our library and its resources as means in therapy. All librarians have not only the opportunity, but also a duty to define and then to assume their roles more aggressively in the continuing education in any milieu. The most important thing is to know your clientele, and know where your priorities lie. (Author/SJ)

ED 062999

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# BIBLIOTHERAPY: A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

by

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Presented at; Institute on Specialized Library Services, sponsored by Extension Division, Indiana State Library July 22 and 23, 1971, Indianapolis, Indiana.

LI 003 680

BIBLIOTHERAPY: A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Tell it like it is: Light your fire; Social responsibility and involvement. These are the cries we hear today. Those of you who have attended the ALA Conferences know of the struggle the association is having. Among the recommendations of high priority made in the Aconda Report were those made dealing with social responsibilities of ALA and its membership. These were defined as (1) the contributions librarians can make in relieving and even solving the critical problems of society; (2) the support for all efforts to help inform and educate the people on these problems and to encourage them to read the views and facts regarding them.

Your institute has been planned for these two days to focus its attention on "where the action really is" - on the serious problems of our contemporary society; to find ways and means whereby we can contribute to making it a better society.

"Light your fire" is one of the terms the young are using today. What it means, as I understand it, is: to develop an enthusiasm, a concern and then to commit yourself to what is really happening. There seems to be a basic assumption which holds that we already know what the issues are and all we need is to commit ourselves to action. Unfortunately, by concentrating on the issues, we frequently blind ourselves to our more fundamental problems - namely what is causing the need. Perhaps today we can get down to these problems; perhaps we can then light a fire, shed some light on what we are doing and, most important, generate some heat and energy to do what we not only can do but should do.

What do we use as sparks? As fuel? Ourselves and our books. How do we keep the fire going? Using these ingredients as means of communication, using them in therapy, using them to help the individual to learn, to be what he still can be. This is what Miss Moody and I will be talking about.

My presentation is to be on Bibliotherapy, what it is, its background, its general principles and definitions.

Before I start, I should like to tell you two things about myself; Who I am and why I am here today. First of all, I am a Librarian; one who believes in using books in therapy. I am not a therapist though I have made an extensive use of reading as a therapeutic adjunct in therapy, through informal group discussions, poetry reading hours, definite referral follow-up with patients in physical and mental rehabilitation. I am a Patients Librarian, who has built our library services in the hospitals for our Clinic patients on the philosophy and concepts underlying bibliotherapy. The experiences I have had throughout the many years during my career, plus my belief in the dynamics of reading, have deepened my conviction that, more than ever before, we librarians must focus our attention on this aspect of our profession: getting books and people together to help people develop living skills, help rebuild lives and to invest man with dignity.

Why am I here? When Mr. Wang extended this honor to me, my first reaction was that I should refuse his kind invitation.

I felt I might be too much a part of the Establishment (according to Reich in his Greening of America, I belong in Consciousness level No. 2). I might be too set in my old patterns and ways to add new concepts.

I thought it should be a younger person, just becoming involved in this area. After all it is the young who are seeking and searching for means to relate; they are the ones who could "tell it like it is." What convinced me that I might have something to offer was the information that the group today would be made up of librarians from many types of libraries, not only from hospitals and institutions.

A number of years ago, I wrote that the development of bibliotherapy was confronting the librarian with one of its greatest opportunities, namely, taking an integral and valuable part in the programming of the health of the community, meaning a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.

We librarians who have been working in hospitals and institutions have long been involved in programming for the rehabilitation and welfare of readers. We use ourselves, our library and its resources as means in therapy, a means of assisting the person in becoming what he still can be, to develop living skills, to bolster self esteem.

I felt at the time I wrote this (a little over two years) and I feel it even more strongly today that all librarians have not only the opportunity but also a duty to define and then to assume their roles more aggressively in the continuing education in any milieu. We have the resources available. What some may lack is an adequate understanding of the principles of bibliotherapy, and an insight into the application and potential of using books in therapy. With this background, plus imagination and conviction, librarians should be able to institute programs which would strengthen the role of the library as an active participant in the social forces influencing mental health today.

I need not remind you nor point out the many problems we librarians are having today. We are not unique : all professions are facing crucial demands and pressures for change. Perhaps one of our greatest problems lies in justifying our existence. We are being asked what is it that a library does which no other institution can do. What is it that I as a hospital librarian know , that no other staff member in the institution does. What can I contribute to raising the level of care for the patient that no one else can?

In the time alloted to us, Miss Moody and I cannot spell out the answer for you, nor can we supply you with the methodology how to go about it. We can perhaps stimulate you to do some thinking about what your distinctive role is in the total environment. Listen to what one of the young had to say, in the June 15, 1971 Library Journal. Evelyn Geller, School Library Journal editor writes: "Of course the public library has for

decades been pussyfooting on its function regarding the public. Even if it has extended its services beyond pushing mysteries, sports, home care, bestsellers, and other books that 'move' it has not really advanced far beyond the rental library." She feels that the philosophy of addressing itself only to a small segment of society has deflected the library from its original goal of trying to serve, to elevate its entire community, including the working class. This is one of the reasons, she concludes why the libraries are not getting even reasonable support these days.

This is a young librarian speaking. You may feel she doesn't quite understand the real problems we are facing. But listen to what our revered and esteemed, "older librarian,"Jesse Shera wrote. He said that we librarians must extend the boundaries of our thinking, which has been channelled for so many years and must accept into the body of our professional knowledge ideas that at first seem alien, if not hostile. Dr. Shera continued that our profession must be alert, sensitive and responsive, so as to insure open and clear communication with all relevant sources of innovation, such as the fields of psychology, physiology, the behavioral sciences, as well as the humanities.

I am not trying to discourage you, nor confuse you. What I hope we can do is to stir you a bit today, to arouse your imagination, nudge your conscience. Then feeling a bit guilty, perhaps you will go back home to "light a fire," to try to broaden your experiences through using yourself, your library, and its resources in different ways, to relieve and perhaps ameliorate

the problems facing our society.

That you will have to do this is becoming increasingly more evident. Changing concepts in hospital planning and the evolving health care systems will mean that more patients will be taken care of in the community, as ambulatory out-patients. Faster re-integration of the prisoner is one of the criteria of correctional institutions. Many of the people you will be seeing were once cared for entirely by a hospital or institution; the responsibility for care is now being shifted to be shared by the community through its appropriate centers.

Your library is one of these centers. You are the specialist in your area. You as a focal part in the environment can establish means of communication with all these people, to assist in services designed to meet the needs of modern society. Can you do it? I think you can. There is a TV ad which goes something like this: "If you think there is nothing you can do, think harder."

Let's start thinking now, while I tell you a little about the dynamics of reading; the patterns, adaptations and emotional responses of reading. This is after all our business; it is also the basis underlying the concept of bibliotherapy.

I am going to base my remarks largely on material which appears in The Dynamics of reading, a book by David H. Russell, published this Spring. Professor Russell will be remembered for his work with children's reading and also, in association with Caroline Shrodes, the exploration of the interaction that takes

place between the content of the book and the reader. I urge all of you to read the book. "Reading," Russell writes, "is like much of human behavior. Imaginative reading permits the reader to be both the spectator and participant." As a spectator, he brings all his needs, goals, defenses and values; these will influence his selectivity of what he sees and reads. As a participant, he will respond in relation to the ideas he has read and selected, with varying degrees of acceptance and rejection. Caroline Shrodes wrote, concerning this response, that "The eye finds what the mind is seeking. The mind finds what the heart is seeking." (Every librarian SHOULD memorize these words to use when confronted by charges that some books are filled with dirty words and pictures.)

During reading, the total person may become involved. When this occurs, namely, total involvement with an emotional response, these responses may have scientific merit because they are observable ways of behaving.

Until fairly recently we have broadly categorized reading as contributions to knowledge, for hortatory reasons and as recreation. Reading does not have to be "used," much of it is simply there to be enjoyed. But even this enjoyment can be listed as one of the effects of reading. We can go much deeper; we can look at the dynamics of reading through the eyes of a teacher, clinician, or therapist who hope for such specific effects as influencing ideas and values or increasing self-insight and social awareness.

By joining psychology and literature, Russell contends that the gap which now exists between humanism and science can be bridged. Both disciplines are concerned with human nature, emotions, ideas and imagery; both have common goals in developing insights about man's behavior, using only divergent approaches. Using the two together, we may extend our knowledge of human aspirations and behavior.

There are factors which hinder study of effect and emotional response; a particular stumbling block is our limited knowledge of what goes on in communication, both verbal and non verbal. In a recent article in the American Scientist, titled "The Brain of Pooh: an essay on the limits of mind," the author, Sinsheimer, writes of man's major distinction, the ability to communicate, particularly through speech. Remarkable as it is, it must be recognized as being a limited device as there are real limitations in language and communication. He asks: "Can we truly express everything we experience or conceive in speech." Sometimes we have to coin new words for new concepts; yet it is still difficult to convey the meaning to others. He writes: "The expression of feelings and emotions is particularly difficult and seems to interweave several dimensions of emotionality." As librarians we must learn to listen - and listen carefully - to listen to what is being said - but more important is what is not being expressed in words.

One may safely say, however, that effects of reading on the personality and character have been accepted since the days of the Greeks. One need only read the bibliography of an article on the history of bibliotherapy to note that citations

may include names of Plato, Celsus, Socrates. Going through the historical writings of physicians, like Rush and Galt, one may also assume that from time to time books were used with marked success, particularly with the emotionally disturbed person.

I shall not go through the history of bibliotherapy--that you can readily do yourself, except to point out that as far back as 1848, John Minson Galt, gave the first paper "On reading, recreation and amusements for the insane," at a meeting of what is now called the American Psychiatry Association. Though he combined these three activities in his title, he considered each separately; reading was not considered primarily as recreation nor as an amusement. It was regarded as a distinct adjunct in the care of the patient.

Dr. Galt set up some principles on the application of reading with his patients. He noted the classes of patients and the type of reading he felt was particularly useful. His basic thoughts on book selection parallel these that we use today; as he put it, the book must be adjusted to the individual, basing the choice on the whole person as he is, namely, on medical consideration, on education, and the mental state of the patient. He also felt as we do today, that interest takes precedence over literary quality and that the collection should be varied to include a wide variety, from the newspaper to the scholarly work.

Remember this was in 1848! What has happened in the intervening years? What are we doing now? A great deal of interest has continued; studies were done; the concept of using books in therapy has been more widely acknowledged by physicians, psychologists, educators, librarians, social workers, criminologist. Recent years show a growing trend that social and behavioral sciences are experimenting with bibliotherapy and exploring its usefulness.

I have with me three interesting papers given in 1970 at IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations) at the meetings of the Sub-section of Patients Libraries. These were prepared by librarians from Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, and Russia. Here the use of bibliotherapy is considered as a "state of fact;" using books in the treatment of patients is as indispensible as the use of drugs. I shall talk about these later.

Empirical data and evidence from research is still scant. Individual testimony is formidable. A great deal of anecdotal evidence appears in the literature that reading can influence emotions and attitudes, to lead to a modification of behavior.

There is one study which was completed within the past few years which will have far reaching results. That is the one done by a neighbor of yours. Miss Hilda Limper, Specialist on Exceptional children, Cincinnati Public Library, Ohio. The demonstration was a two-year study of library service to exceptional children and included the making of a color film of the study, Reaching out: The Library and the Exceptional Child. This is now available.

Another recent study, at three institutions in Washington State was done by Harris McClaskey. He used this as the partial requirement for his doctoral thesis which is entitled, Bibliotherapy with the emotionally disturbed patients: an experimental study.

A third important project which covered the period from 1968-1969 is the one from the Patients Library, Agnew State Hospital, California. I shall not describe these projects now; later during our discussion period, we may be able to come back to them. Of future importance

in stimulating further study and research in bibliotherapy will be the book being published in October by the American Library Association. This book, called Bibliotherapy: methods and materials, is the work of the Committee on Bibliotherapy, of the Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries. The book will help fill a need long felt by librarians and others in setting up programs, doing studies and research.

There are many statements and definitions concerning the effectiveness of reading in therapy; only a cursory review of the literature will show this.

There is one, however, which has been accepted officially by the Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries. That is the one which appears in Websters' Third International Dictionary; it reads: "the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; also, guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading." The Association also accepted the definition of "therapy" as "Treatment of the maladjusted to further restoration to society; a force to relieve social tension."

The most notable advance in the development of bibliotherapy, I think, is the recognition that it is a mode of communication which can be used both for information approach and in psychotherapy. When communication takes place, a relationship is formed which is based on interaction between the participants. The result of this interaction and relationship is a molding and shaping of personality.

Another little "definition" remarkable for its simplicity and directness of phrasing, is the following: "Reading is good medicine

because it is communication." In this simple statement is the underlying philosophy and moral responsibility of bibliotherapy: namely, the transformation and renewal of man. The author, Dr. Aring, speaks of the essential unity of science and literature and says that these related activities of human thought can be used communicatively. It is not possible to be in good form without renewal, and, for him, there is no more convenient way for renewal than reading.

"Transformation and renewal of man." Isn't this what is all about, what is going around about us? Isn't this what the young, what society is looking, searching for? Isn't this what we librarians should be thinking about harder?

How does all this relate to you in your daily work? All these bits and pieces of information I have been giving you, what meaning do they hold for you?

Let me repeat briefly what I have said. In this day of change and upheavel, the basic purpose of the library remains unchanged. What is necessary is a change in our thinking, a re-evaluation of our activities and how they meet and fulfill that purpose and goal.

Simply put: the library has a vested responsibility to society, namely, the whole man and to culture. The contributions of the library today should be to help relieve and perhaps even help in solving the problems of society, whatever they may be, to support all efforts to help improve and educate the citizen. Its resources should be used widely and with imagination. The realm of using the principles of bibliotherapy opens new directions and forces for librarians. Work will take on exciting proportions; the

library will become indeed a vital and integral part of society, truly a source for transformation and renewal of man.

The answer to how you are going to do this lies in yourself. Let me ask you a few questions to help you think harder, as the TV ad says.

Question: Is getting to know your public one of the hardest things you find time for?

Question: Do you assign to your clerical staff or volunteers almost all contacts with your public because you have more important chores to do?

Question: How much of your time do you spend in a "one to one" relationship with your public, both in and out of the library?

Question: Do you use your books and yourself and your library to establish such relationships?

Perhaps the most important question is: Do you know who your clientel is and do you know where your priorities lie?

Pertaining to the last question, I urge all of you to read the excellent article by Edward N. Howard, American Libraries, April, 1971, titled Toward PPBS in the Public Library. Mr. Howard, you may know, is at the Vigo County Public Library, right here in Indiana. Mr. Howard wrote in his conclusion that in the final analysis, PPBS (namely Program cost analysis) "has an exciting potential for librarians in fostering improved community relations, assurance of a fairer share of the public purse, and confidence among all concerned that the emerging public library is focusing its resources on the highest priority needs of the community." Read it and decide for yourself - are you

meeting the needs of your "high priorities".

Toffler, in Future Shock, wrote that the accelerated flow-through we are experiencing cannot but contribute to the instability of personality patterns among many people who have difficulty finding a life style. New skills will be needed in three crucial areas: learning, relating, and choosing.

The new education must teach the individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to evaluate its veracity, how to look at problems from a new direction--how to teach himself. Toffler said" "Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned to LEARN."

If life pace continues its acceleration, we can also anticipate increasing difficulty in making and maintaining life ties. Education will have to teach us to relate.

Education must address itself to the issue of overchoice, namely, the multiplicity and complexities of decisions facing the individual. Quoting him directly, Toffler said, "As overchoice deepens, the person who lacks a clear grasp of his own values (whatever these may be) is progressively crippled. It is no wonder that millions of young people trace erratic pathways into the future, ricocheting this way and that like unguided missiles." The more crucial the question of values becomes, the less willing our schools are to grapple with it.

If you think that this is Toffler using shock tactics (perhaps to sell the book)let me read you a few excerpts from the very recently published Report on Higher Education. This report

was done by the task force of eminent educators, funded by the Ford Foundation. Because of its significance, The Office of Education, of HEW, published it so as to have the widest availability as possible.

The report states that education is not meeting the demand for relevance; colleges and universitities are not fully serving the educational needs of students. Only an intensive national effort can bring about sufficient change before the present opportunities for serious reform are lost.

There is so very much to do. What are YOU as a librarian, doing?

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